10-7-1880


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ALASKA LAND.

A Canoe Voyage Among the Islands and Icebergs.


SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BULLETIN.

Sum Dum Bay, Alaska, August 22, 1889.

On the 18th, after giving our Hoorna friends a little tobacco and rice for the purpose of keeping up "Floss lamium," (kindly feelings), and taking a long last look at the salmon army in its frantic exodus march up the rapids, we slid northward along the coast beneath a black, dripping rain-cloud that cut off all the mountains from alt above 200 feet from the water, and allowed only the base of Admiralty Island to be seen on our left, looking intensely blue in the distance across Prince Frederick's Sound. After rowing a few miles we passed a cluster of picturesque islands at the mouth of Shuck's inlet, or "Shough," as the Indians call it. Passing the two imposing headlands that stand guard at the entrance, we proceeded to explore it, though we knew by the purity of the water and the absence of bergs that it contained no great low-descending glaciers, however numerous the smaller ones might be lying in the hollows along the mountain walls. We found it to be about nine miles long, and less than a mile in average width. The walls are from 1,200 to 2,000 feet high, rising abruptly out of deep water in beautiful curves clad with a dense growth of feathery spruces to the very top—the narrowest and the greenest of the glacial fiords we had yet seen. On the way up the clouds melted into white sun-filled mist and drifted slowly about the walls in fleecy masses, some of these drawn out into thin, lustrous gauze, through which the trees were plainly seen, producing a most beautiful effect, while many a stream came leaping in glad, strong ecstasy through the green woods, filling the air with music from side to side and from one end of the fiord to the other. Four of these cascades, two on each side, make a grand bow of snowy foam as they leap into the dark blue level of the fiord, but the finest of them all is at the extreme head, falling in a magnificent outbounding curve over a granite precipice with a roar distinctly heard at a distance of four or five miles.

GOLD MINES.

About half a mile back from the head of this fall, in a filled-up glacier lake basin, are located the Shough gold mines, which, from the date of their discovery some four years ago, have yielded about $10,000, having been worked in the most primitive way by rockers under great disadvantages. The amount of gold-bearing gravel seems well-nigh inexhaustible; and now a tunnel has been driven through the rim of the basin to drain it and a good number built, it is beginning to pay well, though the heavy timber, with its network of interlacing roots covering the deposit, is a great drawback in working it. About a dozen men are employed by the company of three who now own most of the paying claims. These are the first placer mines of any importance that have been discovered and worked in the Territory; those of the Stickine' river and the Cassiar district being in British Columbia. New diggings have been discovered this summer a few miles from here that are said to pay from $10 to $20 per day to the hand. How extensive this rich deposit may be I could not learn. It is probably quite limited, else large numbers of miners would be already flocking to it.
SUM DUM GOLD MINES.

At the foot of the glacier that shows itself so well as we enter from Stephens' Passage are the Sum Dum gold mines. The red, metamorphosed slates and quartz that have been ground are being ground in the glacier snail is the source of the gold, while the foaming torrent that issues from the snout of the mine, and washes down the gravel and mud. Even the Indians, not much given to studies of this sort, recognize the activity of the glaciers, and, said one of our crew, as he ceased rowing, 'The glacier up there is digging the gold for those fellows,' he added with a smile. Almost any day you enter the bay you hear the roar of the torrent belonging to the gold mine glacier in making its way through the snout of the glacier and leaping into the bay in a showy cataract.

AN INDIAN VILLAGE—A SUMMER DAY.

Half a mile to the west of the fall there is a small island, inhabited by a branch of the same tribe, numbering thirty-seven, all told. They subsist chiefly on salmon and seals, the latter found among the leisbers, mostly well up the two long arms of the bay, near the banks which are usually engaged now in drying and smoking their catch. The salmon, which gives their 'little town quite a lively aspect, is one of the brightest and most striking features of life to enjoy it. Ducks and gulls in large flocks are flying about or resting on the smooth water. The Indians have a small fish trap of bamboo and there a kingfisher and owzel, while eagles, well filled with fish, are taking their course, riding on leisbers or perch'd motionless on the water. The rush of the waves is the thunder of breaking bergs left in straitened positions by the receding tide, the swash and backwash of the waves. In the beds of those that are affloat, the scream of the eagle, rattle of the kingfisher, the pleasant music of the owze! and the sound of the calm wind in the snout of the cataract, and the sustained roar of the cataract. The mines here were discovered last fall by a party of prospectors from Wrangal. Since that time they have built substantial cabins and made a good beginning. Some ten or twelve of them are now on their mine, and destined to receive the tide before which their enterprise is suspended, is the number of allies for those of whom they are the superiors. They are busily engaged in digging the gold with the improvement of the mines.

THE UNIVERSAL PROSPECTOR.

This evening I met six of the party of prospectors that went up a branch of the Chilee river and over the divide among tributaries of the Tanap Verbarof, going up as far as Fort Wrangal, prospecting along the coast as they go. They report that though places were found in several places, none of those were rich enough to pay so remote from any reliable market. They are busily engaged in drying and smoking their catch. The salmon, which gives their 'little town quite a lively aspect, is one of the brightest and most striking features of life to enjoy it. Ducks and gulls in large flocks are flying about or resting on the smooth water. The Indians have a small fish trap of bamboo and there a kingfisher and owzel, while eagles, well filled with fish, are taking their course, riding on leisbers or perch'd motionless on the water. The rush of the waves is the thunder of breaking bergs left in straitened positions by the receding tide, the swash and backwash of the waves. In the beds of those that are affloat, the scream of the eagle, rattle of the kingfisher, the pleasant music of the owze! and the sound of the calm wind in the snout of the cataract, and the sustained roar of the cataract. The mines here were discovered last fall by a party of prospectors from Wrangal. Since that time they have built substantial cabins and made a good beginning. Some ten or twelve of them are now on their mine, and destined to receive the tide before which their enterprise is suspended, is the number of allies for those of whom they are the superiors. They are busily engaged in digging the gold with the improvement of the mines.

Some little 'prospecting' has also been done this summer in the mining districts of Alaska. Few claims have been located. The quartz ledges on Baranoff Island are still receiving a good deal of attention, though not as extensively as some time since. The quartz ledges, on which work has been suspended, is still considered valuable property by the owners.

The Superintendent tells me that the Company, having already spent a good deal of money on their mine, hesitate as to whether they should take the risk of digging the mine or sell it to a New York Company who wish to buy it. This Company, the Superintendent, say they purchased the Henrietta claim, on the same lode, and several others, and expect to pay it out and sell it in the market for gold on their property by the 1st of January.

Reviewing Alaska mines in general, I see nothing to change the conclusion arrived at last year, while writing for the "Commercial Advertiser," that this country will be found moderately rich in the precious metals; but, owing to obstacles on the part of the government and other resources—fish, furs, timber, etc.—will be brought into the markets of the world long before any considerable quantity of gold shall have been discovered and brought to the east.